

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Pillsbury "A" Mill

AND/OR COMMON

Pillsbury "A" Mill

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

116 3rd Avenue SE

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Minneapolis

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Minnesota

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE

27

COUNTY

Hennepin

CODE

053

**3 CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY**

\_\_\_ DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

\_\_\_ STRUCTURE

\_\_\_ SITE

\_\_\_ OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

\_\_\_ PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

\_\_\_ BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

\_\_\_ IN PROCESS

\_\_\_ BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**☒ OCCUPIED

\_\_\_ UNOCCUPIED

\_\_\_ WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

\_\_\_ YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_\_ YES: UNRESTRICTED

☒ NO**PRESENT USE**

\_\_\_ AGRICULTURE

\_\_\_ MUSEUM

\_\_\_ COMMERCIAL

\_\_\_ PARK

\_\_\_ EDUCATIONAL

\_\_\_ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_\_ ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_\_ RELIGIOUS

\_\_\_ GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_ SCIENTIFIC

☒ INDUSTRIAL

\_\_\_ TRANSPORTATION

\_\_\_ MILITARY

\_\_\_ OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

The Pillsbury Company

(Mr. Marvin Tenen Plant Manager, Pillsbury "A" Mill)

STREET &amp; NUMBER

116 3rd Avenue SE

CITY, TOWN

Minneapolis

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Minnesota 55414

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Hennepin County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Minneapolis

STATE

Minnesota

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1934

☒ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress/Annex Prints and Photographs Division

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

When the Pillsbury "A" Mill was constructed in 1881, it was the largest and most advanced flour mill in the world. The limestone structure was built for long wear and covered an area 175 feet wide and 115 feet deep. The \$500,000 building loomed six stories high, with basement. From the wheat pit to the roof it measured 187 feet. The foundation side walls were of limestone 8 1/2 feet thick and the rough coursed ashlar walls were 2 1/2 feet thick at the top. It was a two-unit mill-East "A"

and the West "A" where two independent streams of wheat flowed into the mill, and were ground by two sets of machines operated by two groups of workers.

The mill began operation on July 5, 1881 with a 4,000 barrels-a-day capacity; two upright 55 Victor Water Wheels of 1,200 horse-power each supplied the original power. A fire in December of 1881 destroyed much of the old milling complex and from then until July 1882, when the West "A" started, the East "A" carried almost the whole weight of the Pillsbury production.

In 1882 the "A" was fitted throughout with 90 devices called plansifters that displaced 300 reels, 900 pairs of gears, 600 conveyors, 50 scalpers and graders and 20 centrifugal reels, increased the mill's capacity and saved 200 horse power. The average daily capacity of the "A" settled around 17,500 barrels after 1905.

The "A" Mill was operated by water wheel until the 1950's when it was converted to electricity. The old mill race with its massive six-foot thick walls is still extant. The water power machinery in the subbasement still exists, but cannot be viewed due to the unsafe condition of the area.

In 1975 the "A" Mill was being phased out of operation. Constant vibration from its machinery had weakened the structure badly. The river side of the building was badly bowed and was being shored up with steel cables and buttresses. It was in use mainly for sifting special orders of coarse flour which modern sifters were too finely tuned to produce.

## 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1881

BUILDER/ARCHITECT L.S. Buffington

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Only one of the giant flour mills that made Minneapolis the milling capital of the nation from 1880 until 1930 still stands. The Pillsbury "A" Mill was the largest, most advanced mill in the world at its completion in 1881. From a 4,000 barrel-a-day capacity in 1882, it eventually grew to 17,500. The "A" Mill was a masterpiece of industrial design, a standard from which all other mills of its time were measured.

### HISTORY

In 1855 John Sargent Pillsbury left New Hampshire for Minnesota and after much struggle succeeded in establishing a prosperous retail hardware business. In 1869 he sent back east for his young nephew, Charles A. Pillsbury. On June 4, Charles bought into a 200 barrels-a-day, broken down flour mill for \$10,000. Although young Pillsbury knew nothing of the flour business he quickly concerned himself with the supposed inferiority of spring wheat flour as compared to the winter wheat product. Under his management, improvements were made on a device called a middlings purifier that cleaned and graded the middlings from the cracked wheat and retained more of the high food value in the wheat berry for grinding into the flour. In 1870 Pillsbury leased a second mill, doubling the capacity of the firm.

In 1871 this mill, the "Alaska," was bought and the C.A. Pillsbury & Company was formed. "Pillsbury's Best" flour with the dotted circle and four X's appeared the following year. Continued growth culminated in 1881 with the completion of the massive "A" Mill. After it was in full production it recorded a record run of 7,200 barrels that remained unchallenged until 1894 when a rival mill produced 7,900. A month later the "A" cranked out 9,551 and remained undisputed leader throughout the rest of the century. In 1896 it produced 10,783 barrels and in 1905 it increased that to 16,113 barrels in a single day.

The average daily capacity of the "A" settled around 17,500 barrels. The building was a museum of all the ultimate equipment and methods--including the plansifter, perfect steel rollers, middlings purifier, and the first electric light-bulbs in industry in the Northwest--that Pillsbury had improved or developed.

Essayist Henry Adams Bellow stated the character of what the Pillsbury "A"

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Kuhlman, Charles B., The Development of the Flour Milling Industry in the United States, 1929.

Pillsbury Company, "A History of Pillsbury's "A" Mill," informational booklet

Snell, Charles W., "Pillsbury A Mill," Historic Sites Survey report, 1966.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 480080 49180980  
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
C                        

B                          
ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
D                        

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION At the northeast corner of the intersection of Third Avenue and Main Street, proceed northerly approximately 200' along the eastern curb of Third Avenue to the rear wall of the machine shop; thence east along the rear wall approximately 100' to a point; the south approximately 50'; thence east approximately 50'; thence south approximately 150' to the northern curb of Main Street; thence west along the northern curb of Main Street approximately 150' to the point of origin.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Stephen Lissandrello, Historian, Landmarks Review Project

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service 8/7/75

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

1100 L. Street, NW.

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Washington

D.C.

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL   

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

Landmark NOV 13 1975  
Designated: 89-665  
Boundary Certified:  
George F. Emery  
DATE April 17, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

4/24/79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE 2

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Mill was to the world in 1924 when he wrote:

"Here on this floor, is the sum of human progress for uncounted centuries in the grinding of grain; all the milling process that has gone before simply leads up to this stage, and all that comes after is but the conclusion of it. The grinding floor is discipline made tangible, and the closely packed machines stand for the absolute maximum of accomplishment, with no thought for anything else."

